

E-TOOLS FOR TECHNOLOGY UPDATES ON HALON'ALTERNATIVES

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INTRODUCTION

The fire and safety community, which includes fire extinguishing agent manufacturers, research institutions, consulting and engineering companies, and users of fire suppression systems, is investing **an** enormous effort in its search for ideal halon alternatives. Today's e-tools makes a vast amount of information available on the results of such research, as well as **on** emerging new products and **on** novel fire extinguishing technologies. All this information can be centralized in unique websites coordinated by specific e-tools to provide a free flow of information and expertise.

E-TOOLS TECHNOLOGY

The Internet needs to be harnessed to gain the greatest benefit for the end-users. Whereas surfing for pleasure may be satisfying, surfing that enhances the quality of life for this and future generations makes regular surfing (almost) wasteful. The transfer from pleasurable to meaningful surfing emphasizes the need to create and manage a website with sophisticated information processing e-tools efficiently.

The virtual community, created by the Fire & Safety Group (F & S Group), meets this challenge for researchers, manufacturers, and users seeking ideal halon alternatives. The search for the ideal drop-in halon replacements and alternatives has been going **on** for over a decade and has generated a vast amount of technical information and test results encompassing more than **800** chemical substances and various novel approaches to fire suppression. International conferences and workshops provide users with information **on** the latest developments in this field; however, proceedings, books, papers, trade magazines, press releases, research reports, and evaluation programs released by national research institutes, are not always available to the fire suppression designer and user. Through the F & S Group E-tools (Information Center), the fire and safety industry is provided with a secure scientific, technical, and commercial Internet-based information. The results of research for ideal halon alternatives, emerging new products, novel fire extinguishing technologies, and a free flow of information and expertise are consolidated.

INFORMATION CENTER

The Information Center is the major e-tool for information processing and retrieval. Seven distinct categories, **50** subcategories, and **2** "search by name" options make accessing information efficient and searching effective. The major e-tools related to fire extinguishing technologies in general and halon alternatives in particular include the following:

Technical Forums operate like a bulletin board. The Forums are monitored by technical experts and address fire detection, fire extinguishing, gas detection, industrial safety, environment, military systems, traffic safety, and public safety issues. Interested participants can add more topics. The Fire Extinguishing Forum addresses some of the halon alternatives issues; however, a specific forum for these issues is planned for the near future.

The FAQ collection of frequently asked questions provides up-to-date answers **on** key subjects of common interest. The accuracy of the information is greatly assisted by its frequent exposure to criticism by the interested and well-informed fire and safety community. The current list in the FAQ link includes electrical currents, fire detection, fire extinguishing, halon alternatives, keep safe and warm, **NFPA** standards reviews for sprinkler systems, halon substitutes, and safety home inspections.

The Events and Conferences Link is an ever-expanding list of events for the fire and safety global community. Conferences, workshops, symposiums, congresses, meetings, conventions, seminars, and exhibitions are listed in several categories including fire, safety, environment, rescue/EMS, industry, and oil and gas. Important information on each event includes brief event descriptions, availability of proceedings, and contact details such as telephone numbers, web sites, and email addresses. Event planners are invited to click on the “add” link at the top of the page to add an event to the existing list. The list coordinator will make sure your event details will be included on-line within 24 hrs.

Trade Links offer direct access to directories of consultants/experts, educational associations and institutes, government organizations, international and national associations, manufacturers and trade organizations, scientific institutes, standards laboratories, testing institutes, etc. Each link offers concise information on the organization, a brief description, contact details, and website address to allow direct access to the organization. Further development of a specifically dedicated Education & Training Information Center is ongoing, and it will provide the professionals more detailed information on courses, certification, and diplomas awarded by various institutes.

News Links address both the latest news highlights and latest new products. Updated as news breaks, the articles on fire detection and suppression, rescue, safety, environment, industry, and oil and gas are presented in separate categories. The News archives is searchable by topic, title, or key word.

FS-WORLD ON-LINE MAGAZINE

Another e-tool of the F & S Group is the online www.FS-World.com and the quarterly hard copy edition of the FS-World.com magazine, so news from the global fire and safety community is featured online and in print. Technical articles that form the foundation of product development appear regularly in the print magazine. Moving from the technical to the practical realm, from theory to practice, the scope of both online and print magazine expands to include the editorial board’s spotlight on new products and a press release option for manufacturers. Previews and reviews of industry events are presented on-line, as well as interviews with key industry personnel and guest columns. Outstanding web sites take their place in the Featured Websites link; readers are always welcome to nominate a web site for review. e-Commerce is a vast enterprise whose character proves to be quite volatile. Keeping up with the ever-changing situation, the e-Articles present expert and timely information.

HALON ALTERNATIVES TOPICS

Sources for research on halon alternatives are presented in the F& S Group Information Center in the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) format. The technical staff processes information from a wide variety of sources for online publication and makes it available at all times. Current titles include *Halon Alternatives* (based on the latest information from HOTWC conferences) and *Substitutes for Halon* (from the EPA SNAP list and *Federal Register* listing).

Emerging new products go online in the New Product Arena. Either selected by the editorial staff or uploaded by the manufacturer directly into the online database, these products reflect the latest in the halon alternative search. Manufacturers of halon alternatives can post product descriptions, performance data, and news releases.

Free flow of information comes from both news features and open discussion forums. Scanning a myriad of wire services, the editorial staff disseminates and distributes the news in a wider arena than do the individual agencies, companies, and individuals making the news.

Discussion forums open up the possibility for all researchers, manufacturers and users to share knowledge as well as challenge notions submitted by others. The Fire Extinguishing Forum today focuses on halon replacements, their advantages and limitations. The Technical Forum, for those searching for halon alternatives, is a rich resource spanning the entire world. No limit is placed on the discussion. Participa-

tion does not guarantee revolutionary discoveries, but meaningful exchanges outside the walls of conventions and exhibitions, among manufacturers, end-users, and researchers will provide more in-depth understanding and perhaps better application of the emerging new technologies and products.

Conferencing in person and viewing exhibitions of the latest technological advances furthers the goals of researchers and manufacturers alike in uncovering a fitting fire suppression agent as a halon substitute. The calendar is filled with events: HOTWC 2001, Halon Options Technical Working Conference; Air & Waste Management Association 2001 Annual Conference & Exhibition; International Water Mist Conference 2001; NFPA World Fire Safety Congress and Exhibition; and the VFDB 9th International Fire Protection Symposium, to name a few. Dates, locations, and registration information presented in a compact system help manufacturers, research institutions, consulting and engineering company personnel, and users of fire suppression systems plan their schedules efficiently. Look for the Previews and Reviews of the leading conferences online and discuss the latest developments with your peers.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES AND CONCLUSION

Information on new products and independent research constitute an important part of the technical data required by decision-makers to select the best solution to their fire protection problem. Ongoing training and educational opportunities share knowledge and explore ideas thoroughly. Choosing the right in-service training experience takes careful examination of the options. The virtual community at F & S Group **sorts** through the resources to present a clear and concise picture of these options.

Publishing the findings from tests and the evaluations of new fire extinguishing agents enables end-users to choose critically and evaluate each halon alternative according to its merit. Approval agencies worldwide play a critical part in the evaluation of new agents. Active links direct users to these agencies and trade organizations, for detailed information on their latest rules and legislation.

The vast amount of information on the Internet overwhelms many manufacturer, engineer, designer or end-user. The F & S Group E-tools provide this information in a user-friendly compact format, to maximize the effectiveness for the global fire and safety community. Today's e-tools bring vast amounts of information on research, as well as on new products and on novel fire extinguishing technologies to the tips of one's fingers when one knows where to search for it.